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■ SATURDAY 3PM CHAMPIONSHIP SPECIAL

NOW AND THEN: Jason Sherlock now and (below) celebrating a goal for Dublin in 1995

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'The last thing you

want growing up is to

be singled out for the

colour of your skin,

your nationality

or your race...



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Migration and sport paint dazzling picture of a modern Ireland

■ Kieran **CUNNINGHAM**

fication for a fourth Olympics. She moved to Ireland in 2006 from Latvia, becoming an Irish

Boxing, as ever, will be ex-

of English.

But he knows the language of the ring intimately. So many lrish fighters talk of wanting to be a 'universal boxer'.

That's due to Antia, it's one of

is core principles. To many, the greatest days

His captain was Mick Mc-

Carthy, a man who was equal parts Yorkshire and Waterford. Of Charlton's squad for Euro

'88, 12 were born in England

citizen in 2011.

LONDON in late July is a sauna by a different name.
That was certainly the case in 2012 at the ExCel Arena

ing and Ireland coach Billy Walsh needed a moment to catch his breath after the last fight of the day.

But his eyes were flashing and he wore a broad grin.

Not only had all his boxers wen their opening fights the pected to deliver medals and one of the main reasons why Irish fighters can take on the world is Zauri Antia.
He came to Ireland in 2003 from Georgia to work as a technical coach – even

won their opening fights, the massive Irish support in the venue had raised the roof. It was put to Walsh that it was an unexpected bonus, wasn't having any of it.
"Half the country is Irish,
sure didn't we build the

It was yet another reminder of the massive impact of emigration and migration on Irish life – and sport is no different. in Irish sport were those provided by Jack Charlton's Ireland at three major tourna-

Migrant

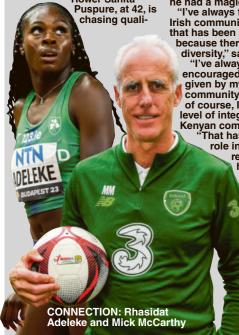
Walsh himself is now a migrant in Colorado, guiding Team USA's fortunes. Having a keen interest in boxing

plenty of Olympic medals before 1924. Most came in the colours of the US, with the

colours of the US, with the storied Irish Whales dominating throwing events.

This summer's Olympics in Paris will be a perfect illustration of the positive impact that migration has had on Irish sport

Much focus will be on sprint star Rhasidat Adeleke, born in Dublin to Nigerian parents.
Rower Sanita
Puspure, at 42, is chasing quali-



or Scotland.

The sons and grandsons of the diaspora, they did their ancestral country proud.

"Every player we brought into the squad considered themselves Irish... had it history, he knows the story of Marty O'Brien. His real name was Martin Sinatra – his son could sing a bit... but he boxed under that pseudonym as Irish migrants in America had such a dominot been for the economic circumstances which forced nant role in the fight game.
It's 100 years since Ireland first competed at the
Olympics as an independent
nation, but Irish athletes won their parents and grandparents to emigrate, they'd have been born and reared in Ireland," was Charlton's verdict.

Impact

Migration has always been part of the Irish sports story.
Think of the impact that Kenyan athletes have made on the biggest stages. Maybe the greatest of them all was 800m sensation David Rudisha.

an early age by a Corkman, Brother Colm O'Connell – an

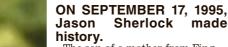
Brother Colm O'Connell – an accidental coach who found he had a magic touch.
"I've always felt part of my Irish community, and I think that has been a strength to me because there is strength in diversity," said O'Connell.

"I've always felt very encouraged by the support given by my family and community in Ireland. And of course, I had a very high level of integration into the

Kenyan community.
"That has played a huge role in helping me to reach the level I eing Irish and being Kenyan." This *Inside*

Sport special is a tribute to the stories of migration and sport that paint a dazzling picture of

CONTRIBUTORS: Kieran Cunningham, Garry Doyle, Derek Foley, Karl O'Kane, Mark McCadde



The son of a mother from Finglas and a father from Hong Kong, he became the first mixed-race winner of an All-Ireland.

That was nearly three decades ago, but you can count those who've matched his feat on the fingers of one hand

Dublin's Craig Dias and Stefan Okunbur of Kerry in football, Cork's Seán Óg Ó hAilpín in

nurling.
But, by the time the bicentenary of the GAA comes around in 2084, it may well be the norm for county teams to have mixed race players on board.

Sherlock will always have that little slice of history, but it took him a while to fully accept his

background.
"The last thing you want growing up is to be singled out for the colour of your skin, your national ity or your race," he said.

"Certainly, from my perspective, I wanted to be accepted. To be called a Dub was the best thing that I could be called, and to be

seen as a Dub.
"I was very reluctant to accept and embrace that side. My mother and father weren't together so I didn't have a huge connection with my father and his family at

Heritage

"I didn't embrace that side of my heritage and I was very happy to live in a world where I was ius a Dub like everyone else."

Sherlock credits a documentary he made with RTE in instigating

a seachange in how he viewed his identity and his heritage. He was still a teenager when

that fateful year of 1995 drew to a close, and a phone call out of the blue left him curiously flat. The call told him that his father, Denis Leung, had been

> Africa. Sherlock didn't ave any real relationship with him and doesn't ecall actually grievng. Indeed, he plaved in he League of Ireland for JCD that night.

But, when the docuhe dug a little deeper into Leung and the Chi-

nese part of his ancestry.
"Post playing, I was at a stage where I was trygot to where I got to. I'd seen lot of negatives with my mixed race background but, as I got older and undertood things a bit more, I had a lot more apprecia-tion and acceptance of it,

"Being asked to do a realistic enough to know there's far more talented play-ers and more successful players who deserved a documentary so it was important to me that, if I was doing one, I'd address things that I hadn't really explored myself. That was my father and his heritage and to live in his last footsteps - that was important to

"It has given me a far greater appreciation of his life and the challenges that he faced. Coming to Ireland, looking for work, looking for a life, having to leave others and sisters at home, and

CUNNINGHAM All-Ireland champ on his heritage and diversity in GAA

turning point for me and it's given me an appreciation of had The Outhere Brothers' performing 'Boom Boom Boom'. people's stories and where they might have come from in terms The following summer, it was adapted as a Hill 16 anthem in praise of Sherlock. His Twitter of their own heritage."

Sherlock is just hours away

"Like all sporting moments,

they capture a moment in time.

reluctant to be part of it be-cause I looked at my career in a

There was a time when I was

time that they had.

That just doesn't seem right. How can the boy wonder be

from his 48th birthday as we

how hard that must have been.

"Certainly, that was a key

middle-aged? How can the man who was the GAA's first teen idol be staring down the barrel at 50? For a long time, that first glorious season with Dublin in 1995 seemed to almost haunt

Sherlock Who wants to be defined by something they did at 19? But that long hot summer was so impactful that perspective makes Sherlock view it differ-

After all, you can't really remember me. "A lot of water has gone escape it, no matter how many under the bridge since then Life has had its challenges years have passed since then On Friday nights, BBC Four shows reruns of old Top of but that year certainly had a the Pops episodes. A couple

everyone was talkin

about Luke Littler

I've always appreciated what the GAA has done for me. I'll

old last week when everyone handle is BoomJayo. That says Reluctant

> tioned and I was thinking 'do you not remember me, I was only 19?' I was hoping to get a shout out, so that made me feel

certain way.
"Now...I do it myself, when I look at sporting heroes, I go back to certain moments in "So I'm open to it and enjoy it that people get transported back to a moment when they

"It goes without saying that our classrooms are different now in terms of the colour and

"Actually, I did start to feel was talking about Luke Littler There was a discussion on the radio and they were bringing up other teenage stars in their brings so much to society and to our sports. I've always felt that sport reflects society and

sport. "Various names were men-

Sherlock is now coaching Westmeath, and one of the players he works with is Libe ria native Boidu Sayeh. That is the new GAA, a far more

"Definitely, when I was growing up, there weren't as many people of mixed heritage going around. My heroes were the likes of Paul McGrath and Chris Hughton, guys like that.

I knew they weren't typically Irish but everyone treated them as Irish heroes," said Sherlock.

creed of our young boys and girls.
"There's an acceptance that's

that sport reflects society and the GAA has been always a leader in being inclusive. "It feels like all my life that racism has been an issue. It was there when I was playing in the

"And I'd hope that the GAA would continue to lead in challenging racism in sport and racism in society."

Proud

Sherlock is happy in his skin these days. Still a proud Dub, but one that knows Leung as well as Sherlock is part of his

"I went to New York for Paddy's Day last year and was watching the parade. There

arade and a couple of them cognised me. They dragged ne out from the crowd and I ned the parade with them "It was caught on video and it was strange because social media wasn't a thing for most of the time that I was playing but that video clip got tens of thousands of O'NEILLS au ed: "What I loved about it was the common theme in what people had to say about the video - that it was so Irish. part of a situ-ation where Guards pull RENAULT a former Irish sportsperson out of a crowd. by that, Lalways be seen as

